

In the Claims:

Please amend claims 1 - 6, 8, 9 and 11 - 19 as follows:

1 1. (Amended) A method for feeding image plates (1) used in intraoral dental X-
2 ray photography into a reading device for the images taken on the plates to be read, wherein
3 the plates (1) are each in a casing which is used during exposure of the plate to X-rays,
4 wherein there is a housing (2) having a door (14) dimensioned for receipt of plates and
5 wherein there is a conveyor (9) adjacent the housing, characterized in that the method
6 comprises the steps of:

- 7 - removing the plates (1) from their casings used during the photographing step,
8 - inserting the plates in the housing (2) provided with the door (14) and substantially
9 protected from light, said housing forming an intermediate storage for the plates,
10 - stacking the plates to form a pack in said housing, the plates being subjected to a
11 force pulling or pressing them towards the conveyor (9) extending to the adjacency of
12 the housing, and
13 - feeding the plates from said housing by means of the conveyor (9), the conveyor
14 each time gripping the nearest plate in the pack so as to forward the plates in
15 sequence along the feeding path.

1 2. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the housing has a bottom
2 (13), characterised in that the bottom (13) of the housing (2) is inclined towards the conveyor
3 (9) so that the plates (1) in the pack are drawn towards the conveyor by force of gravity.

1 3. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 2, characterised in that the pack of
2 plates is pushed towards the conveyor (9) by means of a pushing device, such as a rolling
3 roll (15) located behind the pack.

1 4. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 3, characterised in that the image
2 plate (1) includes a magnetic metal part which is attracted towards the conveyor (9) by means
3 of a magnet (12).

1 5. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 4, characterised in that the conveyor
2 (9) transfers image plates (1) from the housing (2) onto the path of a slide (3) integrated in
3 the reading device, and that the slide grips the plate entering its path each time and brings
4 the plates one by one to the reading step.

1 6. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 5, characterised in that the conveyor
2 (9) comprises a belt or a chain positioned laterally of the housing (2).

1 8. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 7, characterised in that the belt or
2 the chain acting as a conveyor (9) moves stepwise.

1 9. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 8, characterised in that the slide (3)
2 of the reading device makes a reciprocating movement, returning a plate (1) whose image has
3 been read onto the conveyor (9), which subsequently removes the plate from the process.

1 11. (Amended) An apparatus for feeding image plates (1) used in intraoral dental
2 X-ray photography into a reading device for the images taken on the plates to be read,
3 characterised in that the apparatus comprises a housing (2) which is provided with a door
4 (14) and substantially protected from light, the housing forming an intermediate storage for
5 image plates received and stacked therein, that a conveyor (9) extends to the adjacency of the
6 housing while the plates stacked in the housing are subjected to a force pulling or pressing
7 them towards the conveyor, and that the conveyor is provided with gripping means (16) to
8 engage with the plates one by one, in order to forward the plates in sequence along the
9 feeding path.

1 12. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 11, characterised in that the
2 housing (2) has a bottom (13) which is inclined towards the conveyor (9) so that the plates
3 (1) arranged as a pack are drawn towards the conveyor by force of gravity.

1 13. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 12, characterised in that a freely
2 rolling roll (15) is disposed in the housing (2) in order to push the pack of plates towards the
3 conveyor (9).

1 14. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 13, characterised in that it
2 further comprises a magnet (12) so as to attract image plates (1) equipped with a magnetic
3 metal part towards the conveyor (9).

1 15. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 14, characterised in that the
2 conveyor (9) comprises an endless belt or chain which is conducted laterally of the housing
3 (2) and moves image plates (1) in sequence onto the path of the slide (3) integrated in the
4 reading device, and in that the slide is disposed to grip the plate entering its path each time,
5 so as to bring the plates one by one to the image reading step.

1 16. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 15, characterised in that the
2 conveyor comprises two parallel belts (9), between which at least one magnet (12) is placed
3 to attract the image plates (1) towards the belts.

1 17. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 16, characterised in that the
2 conveyor comprises a belt (9) which moves from the top to the bottom, and that the magnet

(12) is placed at a location lower than the bottom (13) of the housing (2) so as to keep the image plates (1) in contact with the belt during the transfer of the plates.

18. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 17, characterised in that the conveyor is a vertically moving toothed belt (9) with a tooth interval equalling the width of an image plate (1) so as to allow the plate to fit in-between the teeth.

19. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 18, characterised in that it comprises a plate-like cover (11) covering the conveyor (9), so as to allow the image plates (1) to pass between the conveyor and the cover within an interstice dimensioned to equal the thickness of the plates.

Please add the following new claim.

20. (New) An apparatus as defined in claim 11, characterised in that it further comprises a magnet (12) so as to attract image plates (1) equipped with a magnetic metal part towards the conveyor (9).

In the Abstract:

Please replace paragraph beginning at line 1 of page 10, with the following rewritten paragraph: